

Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2023

Public Hearing on H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Robert Gallant. I am a lifelong resident of the State and am the State Director for Dungarvin, CT, LLC. We are a human service organization specializing in supports for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6659, the Governor's Budget. I am here to request that you increase funding for community nonprofits during the biennium by 9% in FY24, the first year, and 7% in FY25, the second year. This funding is crucial to honoring your long-term plan to increase funding for community nonprofits because it makes up for the high inflation nonprofits have experienced over the last two years.

The increases the legislature provided in the last biennium were deeply appreciated by nonprofits across the state, but providers of services for people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) did not receive a Cost of Living Adjustment like the rest of the human services system.

Instead, for the last two years, we've received funds to meet the terms of a union settlement, which raised the minimum wage our programs are required to pay staff, but only provided two 3% raises to anyone making above the minimum wage and did not provide any increase in funding for any other program cost, many of which have increased dramatically due to inflation.

The funding we have received over the past two years has been helpful in terms providing a generous wage to the direct care staff who work with the individuals we support. This has allowed us to continue to provide the services we do; without the increases we would probably have to shut our doors due to lack of staffing.

Inflation has had a significant impact on our organization. We have seen a spike in all costs; food, utilities, supplies, automotive and gas. We have had to suspend multiple program sites, new initiatives and capital improvements just to keep pace with rising expenses..

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We are also facing an extraordinary workforce shortage. Our programs are now in competition with Amazon, Target, and other retail jobs every day. Unlike those industries, we can't just increase prices to pay for increased market demand for wages. We're also in competition with

the State, which is running a well-funded PR campaign to hire new state employees into direct service jobs.

As the legislature considers proposals this year to reduce the waiting lists for DDS services, please understand that the system also needs funds to stabilize and maintain the existing services. We cannot expand our reach into new programs and stand-up new services if our existing programs are understaffed and losing money.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective on the budget. Please support increasing funding for community nonprofits by 9% in FY24 and 7% in FY25.